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Governor Declares "Work Zone Awareness Week" **Spotlights Safe Travel Through Highway Construction Zones**

(Juneau) – Governor Frank H. Murkowski has issued an executive proclamation declaring this week (April 3-9) as "Work Zone Awareness Week," to bring the driving public's attention to the fact that highway construction crews have begun their summer season, and drivers should drive with caution in construction zones.

"Summer is the prime time for highway construction in Alaska," Murkowski said. "Our highway projects help us make safety improvements and increase the capacity of our transportation system, yet, nationwide, they are also the location of more 40,000 injuries and 1,000 fatalities each year."

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Commissioner Mike Barton noted that 85 percent of those fatalities and the majority of the injuries in work zone accidents are to the motorists themselves, not the construction workers who work just a few feet away from busy traffic.

"Most work zone accidents happen during summer, on weekdays in broad daylight—when driving conditions are best," Barton said. "Excessive speed and inattentive drivers are the primary causes of these accidents."

Barton said that driving in work zones presents additional challenges to drivers, such as lane restrictions and detours, large equipment working on or near the travel lane, and the lack of normal highway conventions, such as pavement markings and signage.

"Because of the high number of drivers injured and killed in work zones, Alaska is joining other states in spreading the message to promote safe driving in our highway construction zones," Murkowski said. "We encourage all Alaskans to drive safely this summer, no matter what their destination, especially as they travel through highway construction projects."

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More information on National Work Zone Awareness Week can be found at:
http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/nwzaw_events/nwzswweek05poster.htm